



OWN MATTERS

Newsletter of the Older Women's Network New South Wales

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Dear Members

Welcome to the first issue of *OWN Matters*, the newsletter of our new peak body, Older Women's Network NSW Inc.

The new name was suggested by a member of the Editorial Team (who wishes to remain anonymous) was your favourite name by about four to one.

In the Newsletter Survey, many of you commented enthusiastically on past issues of the Sydney Newsletter:

"The Newsletter is a way of connecting to each other, with ever more groups in NSW. Meetings are important, but for me, my newsletter is personal, a time of enjoyment to read and reread at my leisure and to keep for reference. It will continue to spread knowledge about the lives of older women and our issues. We are rewriting the 'up to now' image of ageing – redefining a life full of choices – for ourselves."

"The Sydney Newsletter has matured into a comprehensive publication that you should be really proud of."

The Editorial Team of *OWN Matters* plans to continue the proud tradition established by the Sydney Newsletter over the past decade as we develop a distinctive state voice for older women across NSW

Please let your voices be heard!

Editorial Team

Point of View

OWN Matters

is the Newsletter of the
Older Women's Network
New South Wales Inc.
It is published 11 times a
year. Subscriptions are \$20.

Who Are We?

OWN NSW is the peak body for
sixteen OWN groups in NSW.

OWN promotes the rights,
dignity and wellbeing of older
women through a range of
activities and resources, and
advocates to government and
non-government agencies on
issues of concern to older
women.

Contributions

All members of OWN groups in
NSW are encouraged to
contribute to **OWN Matters**
with items of interest to older
women and letters to the
Editor. They can be sent by
mail or email marked
'Attention – Editorial Team'.
Please include contact details.

Contributions must be
received by the second
Monday of each month.

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The calamitous events of 11 September in the USA have overtaken other issues that were beginning to take shape in this, a federal election year. While horror and human suffering dominate the media it is difficult to separate reason and emotion. Yet, at this time, there is all the more motivation for people of good hearts and cool heads to think issues through. Thus, older women should reflect upon the kind of Australia that we want to pass on to future generations.

Politicians tell us that our work as volunteers is valued, that the important roles we play in families and the community are recognised and that our views are heeded. Yet funding to our national body, OWN Australia, has disappeared, formal government reconciliation with our indigenous people is withheld and lip service and meagre dollars are given to the over 65s in a budgetary "smoke and mirrors" trick.

In the meantime the gap between the rich and poor is widening both here and overseas. For many of us, experiences with banks, large corporations, the collapse of mutual organisations and the degradation of government services continues with disastrous results. Is it any wonder that the beginning of the 21st Century has been deemed by some as the 'Age of Uncertainty'?

Our own expectations and experiences lead us to expect good public health services and public education for all, as well as celebrating our diversity. It would seem that we must lobby harder for these expectations as, in the coming weeks, they may be lost in a sea of rhetoric. The time has come for good people, including older women, to speak out with our voices, our feet and our pens. An Australia that accepts all races, creeds, and colours while offering a life of dignity for its vulnerable citizens will only be attained by the vigilance of those with compassion, good hearts and cool heads.

Pat Simpson

Illawarra OWN

Each month 'Point of View' will feature a member's perspective on a topic that concerns her as an older woman.

A Voice for Peace

Many of us are feeling alone, isolated, different. This is a time to let our voices be heard. We can send the simple message that we must not kill innocent people in the name of justice. If you are online, add your name to the growing cries for peace.

<http://home.uchicago.edu/~dhpicker/petition>
<http://www.thepetitionsite.com/takeaction/224622495>

<http://www.yesmagazine.org>

<http://www.zmag.org/ZNET.htm> and then click on

<http://mai.flora.org/library/wtc/>

OWN NSW Coordinators' Report

The coordinators' report this time will be brief and not filled with too much worrisome business... promise!

The OWN NSW Management Team has now had two meetings. Much of the time has been taken up with the daily business and getting to know each other. We've had joint meetings with the coordinators of OWN Inc/Sydney OWN sorting out which group has to deal with which issues, with much pushing of the difficult ones to and fro across the table. It's all going well, with each group continuing to build a working relationship with the other.

The new name of the newsletter is OWN MATTERS a suggestion that led the others by a country mile. Thank you to whoever it was that put it forward.

The Management Team has nominated particular members of the Team to be primarily responsible for communicating with specific groups, particularly those who are not usually represented at the quarterly groups' meetings.

Almost two years ago the Wellness Resource Group, in partnership with Illawarra and Southern Area Health, applied for an "Older Women's Wellness, Research and Development in Rural Isolated NSW" grant. Hundreds of hours of work went into this on-again-off-again project. Finally, Illawarra Area Health pulled out and we unpaid workers decided that enough was enough! It is with feelings of both regret and relief that the funding of \$115,000 has gone to Southern Area Health instead of OWN NSW. We would have earned 10% of this amount for administration costs, but the pressure to comply with the Department's demands for changes were too great. The partnership between the Wellness Resource Group and Southern Area Health is still in operation. We will now be consultants to the project with all out-of-pocket expenses paid.

Pam Ledden, Betty Murphy, Vonnie Russell

Feminisms ...

In education, in marriage, in religion, in everything, disappointment is the lot of women. It shall be the business of my life to deepen this disappointment in every woman's heart until she bows to it no longer.' **Lucy Stone, 1855**

'I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is: I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat...'

Rebecca West, 1920

Feminism encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practise witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians.' **Pat Robertson, US Politician, 1992**

News Brief on

OWN Australia

OWN Inc. delegates, Noreen Hewett and Joy Ross (with Margaret Sargent as alternate delegate), attended the 9th OWN Australia conference in Melbourne on 17 and 18 September.

All told, there were close to fifty members present at the conference. Everyone who attended from across Australia was smart enough to have booked on either Qantas or Virgin and so avoided the chaos faced by poor Ansett passengers.

Our primary task at this conference was to explore the future and make decisions about OWN Australia, which we did intensely over the two days. Decisions included a new composition of the National Executive and Council (more about this in the next *OWN Matters* newsletter), undertaking a national approach for support for core funding, and maintaining the bi-monthly national news sheet, *Keeping in Touch*.

Joy Ross

Sydney OWN Highlights



This month's highlights are being written with a heavy heart amid the nightmare of the terrorist attacks in the US. While our thoughts are with the American people, we hope that caution will be exercised and the roots of terrorism explored before any hasty retribution by the Americans.

With lots of energy and enthusiasm OWN Inc. (soon-to-be-Sydney-OWN) had its first Working Committee meeting on Friday 14 September. As part of a rather full agenda, we re-affirmed our commitment to meeting regularly with the coordinators of OWN NSW to ensure a smooth hand-over from 'the old OWN' to the two new organisations - OWN NSW and Sydney OWN.

You will have read in the last newsletter of the changes in membership fees and newsletter subscription (your \$20 newsletter subscription goes to OWN NSW and your membership fee goes to your local OWN group - each one determines its own membership fee.)

At the OWN Inc. AGM, it was

agreed that Sydney OWN annual membership fee would be \$5. Each member will receive a written explanation of the method of payment as your membership becomes due.

In preparation for the inaugural meeting of Sydney OWN in November, we will be exploring recommendations for a new constitution, drawing on the AGM workshop notes on Sydney OWN's identity to work out who we are, what our objectives are and how we will achieve them. Members are welcome to come to the next Working Committee meeting when we will start this process.

With a small grant from Sydney City Council, Sydney OWN is taking the opportunity to showcase OWN's wellness activities for older women in the CBD and inner city suburbs in November. We want to emulate that wonderful day in May this year when Bankstown Older Women's Wellness Centre held an extraordinarily successful open day of wellness activities for older women. We welcome members

interested in making it happen to a planning meeting on Thursday 11 October at 10 am.

Around fifteen of us thoroughly enjoyed the video, 'Bagdad Cafe', in August, chuckling once more at the solidarity and magic of the older women in this mid-western classic. Please see the enclosed flyers for more events in October.

Our group is now represented on the South Sydney Domestic Violence Committee, a committee that is aware of and very supportive of women's needs. This is an opportunity to have the issue of older women's experiences of violence in the home on the agenda and encourage other OWN groups to seek representation on their local committee.

Louise Anike and Joy Ross
Coordinators

Understanding Makes a World of Difference!

The major focus of Dementia Awareness Week in September was on how friends can help people living with dementia and their families. A booklet, *Friends: You can make a difference*, can be obtained by phoning the free Dementia Helpline, 1800 639 331. It offers practical tips from people living with dementia and their families about how friends can be supportive. In focus groups comprised of members of the general public, people said that although they felt sympathetic toward people with dementia and their families, they felt helpless and awkward because they did not know what to do, to say or how to act.

For information, support and education about Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia phone the Dementia Helpline, 1800 639 331.

My Aunt Dolly

My aunt's face is etched firmly in my mind. She had a high forehead and wide-set eyes that held a sadness way back in their depths. Her hair was tumble-wash grey.

Older Australians would recognise her as a battler, but I see her as a high wire act. Throughout the 1940s and 50s, she balanced the weight of five kids and the stigma of single parenting, and walked a tightrope of poverty and poor housing, relying only on fierce pride and her lioness love. There was no safety net.

She and her sister, my mother, were as close as lovers though their relationship was as stormy as life on the open seas. It was in my aunt's kitchen that my mother betrayed me. On the table I could see the remains of a bread and cheese lunch. My aunt lived in crowded accommodation back then. The authorities said it would only be a matter of weeks but three years later, my aunt and her children were still living at Herne Bay. Each row of huts was connected to the next by a series of wooden walkways. The walls were thin, so too was the casing around my heart.

"Please Mum, let me stay here with you ..."

"You're his daughter, he has to keep you till you're sixteen."

"But Mum, I'm frightened of him. He's drinking ... please don't make me go back."

My aunt walked over and touched my mother's shoulder.

"It's alright Jess," she said soothingly, "we can manage..."

My mother jumped up, brushing away my aunt's hand. Her face was pinched tight.

"No," she said, looking directly at me, "I can't be dragging her around wherever I go. She's gotta learn we don't get everything we want in life."

I was too choked up to eat the chocolate biscuit my aunt thrust into my hand as I rushed past her and out the door, my heart already racing, along those narrow, wooden walkways.

Time passed. I grew older. I learned that mothers were not to be trusted nor depended upon but oh, the joy of an auntie, no mother-knot to strangle me. 'Twixt Aunt and Niece rests a gentler bow. Perhaps it's satin and can be worn in the hair? I would choose blue to remind

me of soft blue sky, china plates with willow patterns and blue jugs with little throwover covers decorated around the edge with tiny blue beads.

My aunt grew older. "Got any cast-offs for your poor old aunt?" she'd ask, eyes twinkling as though it was all a big joke, but I knew the stark reality of her need.

I learned to anticipate but I had to be careful. Any suggestion that the items I handed over might be new could quickly offend, making it difficult for her to ask the next time. Her pride was eroding but mine wasn't, I had enough now for both of us.

She held my childhood in the palm of her memory and often she would nourish me with little bits. "When you were so high," she'd begin or "Did I ever tell you about the time ..." I was starved for any sign of my own history and she was the only person who detected that hunger.

Accepting my lovers into her life, she'd brew up potfuls of tea and make room on the sofa. "Come on, love," she'd say, "we don't stand on ceremony in this bloody house."

Then came her death. I rushed to her bedside. She was lying marooned on a high bed, her eyes glazed over with pain. "Promise you'll take me home to your place, Darling," she pleaded. "Of course, Aunt," I whispered, stroking her arm.

"Just a mild heart attack, nothing to worry about," the doctor assured me, rocking back and forth on his well-polished shoes.

"I'll be back at the end of the week Aunt," I said, my mind already distracted by work and kids and all I'd need to do in the next few days to get the house ready.

"I'll be waiting with bells on," she replied.

How I hated that doctor for his cruel arrogance and how I raged at myself for accepting his words so easily, so conveniently. I never saw my aunt again and my grief was tinged with the knowledge that I'd not only lost an aunt but my childhood too.

It was years before I could bring myself to put words on paper, to probe the feelings of loss. But writing simply wasn't enough. I began collecting odd bits of china, mostly plates, all of them blue. It's my way of remembering the woman who gave me soft blue love.

Pearlie McNeill

Letters to the Editor

Not only for older women

As you know, for some time I have wanted an OWN group at Wollondilly, but because there is already one in Campbelltown I have not had a lot of success in making it happen. However, I am involved in so many Wellness activities, every time someone wants something new started they come to me and I generally get things going. And I must say that women get right behind me, appreciate me and support the projects.

However, there were three new activities that were requested and I was feeling that I don't mind doing the work but why me all the time. So I called a meeting. I advertised it in the local press as a meeting for women to discuss women's issues using some of your terminology, for the last week in August. At the meeting we had a number of speakers: Sheilah Bartlett from the Benevolent Society at Campbelltown, Marjorie from Macarthur OWN at Campbelltown, Bridget Enos, from the Walk for Heart Group and Ian from our Pump House Gym who had started a fitness program for the over fifties this year. (This is one of my projects and I must say is doing far better than I could ever have dreamed. From humble beginnings – four on the first day – it has grown to between eighteen to twenty five in each group that attends the gym on Monday and Friday mornings.)

Ian's talk went very well, as did the others. We finished the

afternoon with afternoon tea, a presentation of the Drumming Group from Campbelltown and a Belly Dancer from Tahmoor. The atmosphere was just amazing! We had no idea how many would come, and fifty ladies turned up. They all want a group formed in Wollondilly, and our next meeting to discuss the group further, is to be held in Picton Community Centre on 2 October.

The one down-side is, we cannot be an Older Women's Group; we can only be a Women's Group. Being a rural community there are younger women who need the type of support such a group can offer and though most of the members will be older and most of the activities suit older women, when we were asked by the forty year olds, "What about us?" we had to say this group is for any woman who needs it.

I am not sure what part I will play, for, as many of you know, I am having chemo at the moment – it's a fairly severe dose and by the 2 October I could be a bit out of it. If I cannot attend this meeting and it does not go well, I will accept that it was not meant to be. Because I have tried so hard to get the Women's Group started, if it takes chemo to stop it, you can't get a much clearer message than that. If the group does start, I can just go along and enjoy it when I'm okay.

Increased anti-refugee sentiment

I write to rational and compassionate Australians in the wake of the devastating terrorist attacks in the United States. I am aware of increased anti-refugee sentiment, even as I speak to colleagues and family members this morning.

As we know, most of the refugees who are arriving off the coast of Australia, including those on the HMAS Maroona, are fleeing from acts of similar terrorism and gross human rights violations in their own countries, and especially in Afghanistan.

I urge members to engage with our Parliamentary representatives, and with family, friends and colleagues, to distance our current refugee crisis from the events unfolding in the US, and to voice our understanding of the circumstances which are causing the global movement of refugees, along with our statements of compassion for Americans who have lost family, friends and colleagues in the recent terrorist attacks.

Diana Hopkinson

***Bomb them with butter,
bribe them with hope!***

Letters to the Editor

Don't blame multiculturalism

There has been a lot of talk lately about "ethnic gangs" and even racial and religious based sex attacks. For many years Aboriginal women throughout Australia complained about enduring such things, but nobody seemed to listen. Now, because of a particularly brutal attack by young Australian men, of Lebanese ancestry, on two young Australian Anglo-Saxon women, it becomes an issue.

I have seen politicians' emails blaming multiculturalism for it, suggesting that a sort of ethnic pride was responsible for them attacking women. What a load of nonsense! People opposed to multiculturalism will use any excuse, or any one, to attack it.

A few points. Men rape women because they want to exert their power over them. Such attacks occur within communities and between members of different countries. Such men use it as a way of attacking "an enemy group".

But the solution is to educate men, all men, to respect women and renounce violence. Destroying a sense of community, or cultural pride, will not deter men from attacking women. If anything, destruction of pride tends to alienate people from society and make them seem more likely to hate those they see representing it. Does anyone believe that sexual assaults did

not occur in Australia when 90 per cent of the population felt itself to be British?

I am concerned about men attacking white, Christian women, Muslim women, all women, regardless of who these men are. Discussion of their heritage is a mischievous distraction which will not help women in any way. That's a sure thing!

This editorial was printed in the Camden Wollondilly Advertiser on 12 September and sent to us by a member living in the district. It was written by senior journalist, Roderick Shaw, who gave us permission to reprint it.

Eddie's Bastard

It's just another book you pick up... a fat, greenish paperback, something to fill in a few idle hours. A couple of little kids and a pair of old boots on the front cover. On the back the weirdo head of an ostrich or an emu? It's the first novel of a twenty eight year old American male, William Kowalski.

It takes just one page to get in. It surpasses the first test of a good read – surprise me! And it keeps on surprising. You're up to page 107 before you meet a woman! I'm now up to page 145 and I've only stopped reading to tell you this: if you're looking for a nice easy read don't go past *Eddie's Bastard*.

Are they wearing wigs?

Enid Harrison's "Ad-Affected" in the September issue spurred me into writing about the commercials we see on TV about the various wonder shampoos you can buy. I've tried some of them, but none of them produce the effect you are led to expect. (Not that I really thought they would, but I had to try.) I've never seen anyone anywhere, young or old, whose hair looks like it does on the people in the commercials. So shiny, sweeping from side to side immaculately with every movement, not one hair separating from the others. Are they wearing wigs? Or what? Hmmm.

Renee Simons

World Assembly

I am writing to let you know that OWN Europe is keen to develop an older women's caucus for the World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid next April and is currently contacting friends and groups across the world to see if we can join up to run a day seminar/series of workshops during the NGO forum.

Are any of you planning to come to Madrid or go to the New York preparatory meetings? The next one is in 5 – 10 December. I hope to be there. I have now got wind of an Asian Older Women's Network and hope to have the contact details shortly.

Dorothy Cox

Elizabeth Sclater

Theatre Group

Hi, it's my turn to tell tales about the Theatre Group!

On a bright Sunday afternoon in mid-August, everyone in the Theatre Group (bar me!) recorded our latest songs from the show *Doing Our OWN Thing* in a professional recording studio. We are looking forward to hearing our new CD!

On Sunday 26 August, seven members of the cast travelled to Canberra to perform at the Office of the Status of Women "Women Speak Out" Conference. They asked us to perform during the cocktail party (!) which was held in the foyer of the new National Museum of Australia. When we saw the size of the space, we nearly had a fit! It was huge. Everyone was dressed to the nines, everyone was talking at once and we felt a bit like "Wow, are these people really going to be interested in us?"

Anyway, some nice young guys (why is everyone so young these days?) set up a platform and microphones, so it was OK. What looked like hundreds of women formed a semicircle around the platform, listened attentively and when we'd finished clapped and cheered in great appreciation. The audience, which included a couple of men and a handful of Aboriginal women, really let us know how much they appreciated our Reconciliation Song.

At the time of writing, a small number of the cast are on a tour in the Upper Hunter with their Domestic Violence Show, starting at Murrurundi. More about this from next month's scribe.

Norma Bastock
Nowra

The PERSONAL \$

POLITICAL

'The personal is political' is not an outworn slogan. In an election year for the Federal Government there is a strong need to focus subjectively on the many social injustices in our user pays society. We must persist in our humane objective of working for the rights, dignity and wellbeing of older women, particularly when people's awareness is at a higher level, as it generally is during election time.

Think about what issues that affect you as an older woman; talk about them, raise them within your OWN group and outside OWN. Women's votes are numerically important, which means that we can be effective in drawing attention to issues that are important to us.

Hospitals and health services can be political targets – many older women suffer bone breakages and many of us find health services seriously wanting. Lack of nurses is one. Are the rewards commensurate

with the demands put upon nurses? Despite their university degrees and high technical knowledge, female nurses have to put up with the traditional stereotypical atmosphere whilst dealing with massive decision-making demands placed on them. There is a need for research into early discharge from hospitals and the lack of follow-up services. The problem of cross infections also needs urgent attention. Participation in decision-making could be encouraged by patient representation on hospital boards.

Nursing homes for profit-making is another big issue. One of the few things the Federal Government has done, because it's cheaper, is to use Home Care to keep us older women out of these urine reeking, untreated-bed-sore places, with untrained personnel at higher and lower levels. In such places the level of decision-making by patients is minimal and they are generally treated with almost total disrespect.

Free Dental Clinics are a must for older people. Gaps there are aplenty in pensioners' teeth as they are ripped out – and then there's the long waiting lists for plates thus affecting the food we can eat. Dentists don't seem to be keen on working longer on fillings for older people these days.

"Rage, rage until the dying of the light," and do what we can until death do us part.

Enid Harrison
Woy Woy

Me and My Cholesterol

Going through my collection of newspaper cuttings that are piling up on my bedside table waiting to be read during my next period of 3am insomnia I came across a statement by Trade Minister Vaile, in the Sun-Herald, that Australia would be willing to put "everything on the table" for a free trade agreement with America. The article was about Howard negotiating with the US for greater access to the American market for our rural exports. That's all very well, but absolutely FREE TRADE with America in exchange? For everything?

So, we should allow powerful American drug companies to overrule the price caps on the subsidies they receive from our PBS? These big drug companies already argue that the subsidies they receive from our PBS limit how much they can charge other countries and so limit their profit. They are cranky about that.

I started thinking about this. What if I had to pay the non PBS price for my Lipitor which keeps my cholesterol in check? Could I afford \$60 a month for the same tablets I now pay \$3.50 for? My cholesterol problem is genetic and cannot be controlled by diet alone. After two heart attacks and a triple by-pass I simply cannot allow my cholesterol to increase. But it's hard to believe that any government, even John Howard's, would agree to remove the price caps on such life-saving drugs. Don't bet on it! The Minister for Health mentioned the possibility several times, but Dr Phelps, President of the AMA, sailed into him with strong objections by GPs. The matter seems to have been dropped.

But there is still a great deal to worry about with the turmoil that General Practice is in at the moment.

Patient care is endangered because of a fee-for-service system with a low Medicare rebate. Doctors no longer have the time to sit with patients, to think, to be interested. This is a dangerous situation for the elderly particularly, and for the chronically ill.

Demoralised GPs are beginning to sell themselves to big business and the stockmarket

via the Corporate owned Medical Centres. The Corporatisation of Medical Practice, as it is called, is occurring rapidly and without much public debate and by far the more worrying trend in the health system today. GPs are being offered anything up to \$200,000 as a sign on fee if they commit to a five year contract because they are a valuable commodity for these Centres through their ability to tap into Medicare funds via their referrals to pathology, X-Ray and specialists.

How soon will it be before our GPs disappear like our corner stores? I cannot see the 24 Hour Medical Centre taking time to allay fears about the many mysterious symptoms that an ageing body is heir to. And I cannot imagine that anyone from a 24 Hour Clinic would call round to my house after work was done, to check my progress after heart surgery, as my GP did on three occasions, three years ago. Nor would they take the time to advise me of tests I could have that would forewarn me of problems that might occur, as my GP did last week. Being me, I will probably ignore her advice, but I appreciate being monitored so carefully and always leave her rooms feeling warm and looked after. I would never feel the same after a tightly scheduled visit to a Medical Clinic, and my friends all feel the same way.

We must keep up the struggle to preserve our public Health system and resist corporatisation of General Practice. We need our GPs and they deserve a better deal than they are getting now.

Muriel Hortin

PS. Amongst all the dross on the Internet I discovered the website of the Doctors' Reform Society, which prints interesting articles from their paper, New Doctor. My essay above contained information from an article by Dr. Con Costa. The website is www.drs.org.au

We can do it!

At the State Conference in July there was great enthusiasm expressed about holding a special exhibition to showcase older women's creativity, skills and interests and to promote OWN.

Well, we recently held our first meeting to share ideas and begin the planning process. It was decided that the first week in May 2003 is a good time to aim for, though whether we hold the exhibition during the week or over the weekend is still dependent on the prices being asked for venues.

We will approach local councils, including Parramatta Council, TAFE and regional galleries for a suitable venue. We'll also check out at the Riverside Theatre in Parramatta, Olympic Park, Maritime Museum, Wesley Centre, Sydney Lower Town Hall and Mott Hall. Mott Hall was thought to be a very good choice, particularly if the dining room in the Seniors Centre could also be used for discussion groups and other activities.

The committee feels that in view of all the work and travelling involved in mounting an exhibition of this kind, it could be run over two days as we don't want anyone to miss seeing it.

Another suggestion was to hold a dinner, perhaps on the first night. This was thought to be a great idea, if not at the time of the exhibition, at another time. Tattersalls was thought a possibility – might get some Gaming and Racing funding!

Apparently the United Nations

International Year theme for 2003 is 'Fresh Water'. Lots of scope for ideas there!

In discussing activities for the day, drumming, both as performance and audience, was high on the list. Quilting was left off the published list and that's a must. Quilling was suggested also. These are suggestions only at this stage. We have lots of ideas, but who can carry them out for us? Let us know!

Wouldn't Mott Hall look wonderful with OWN banners hanging from the cross beams? They could be quilted, made from felt and embroidered. What a great project for members of the groups to participate in. Send your ideas to '87' marked Exhibition, or bring your ideas to the next meeting of NSW groups on the first Tuesday in November.

Lurking Danger

There's danger lurking in old bones; yours may be crumbling but you might not know it until you have a fracture.

Last October I fell down among the flower pots and fractured my wrist. Months later I noticed a chemist's sign saying, "Get your ultrasound bone density test here". So I did. She said, and I jest a bit, "Put your foot in this bucket of water. Oh dear, you're high risk. Go see your doctor. That'll be forty bucks."

The doctor said "Get thee to a specialist, woman." So I did. I took my 83 bucks, as instructed – Medicare will

reimburse – and had another test. Much more high-tech this one. Back to the doctor for a change of drug, something stronger to stop the rot. I tried two different drugs, neither suited, as reactions vary so I went back to the original Rocaltrol.

I am now loaded with information. If I'd known all this, I might have avoided the fracture. Osteoporosis is crumbling bones. After menopause there is a sharp decline in the production of oestrogen which accelerates calcium loss.

Amongst the other risk factors are excessive alcohol, having a small thin frame, advanced age, a family history, early menopause, low intake of calcium and a sedentary lifestyle.

If you have osteoporosis do not despair. Help and plenty of information is at hand including instructions on diet and exercise – all simple, sensible and possible. Good luck!

Dorothy Cox

Haikus from Queensland

Dusk. Platypus. There!
Sh! A flip of the tail, down
Foraging beneath rocks.

Full moon, Southern Cross,
Milky way. I clean my teeth
Far from the real world.

Me, Mars and the Moon
Can this stay forever, please?
Hell! The dinner burns.

Through the bumblebox
And mulga trees emus stalk,
Elegant and poised

Joan Johns

Discussion Groups

August Even though we held our August meeting a week later due to the usual date coinciding with the annual general meeting of OWN, and despite the cold wind and heavy rain, our group gathered in the warmth of Windmill Street to discuss, "What impact does courage have on our lives?"

It soon became obvious from the discussion that courage was needed to deal with many of the challenges of everyday living. It also became obvious that the human spirit, in most cases, rose to provide the courage required. For example, the courage to keep trying to do one's best in the face of ill health, family problems, economic hardships and the like; the courage many of the newcomers to Australia have shown in leaving familiar surroundings to begin life anew amongst us; the moral courage shown by employees who blow the whistle on corrupt practices they can no longer tolerate within their organisations; the courage of people holding to their convictions against the tide of popular opinion. We agreed that without courage our society, including its older women, would not have achieved the richness that it has.

September The topic for September was "Coping with Change". Discussion ranged over a great variety of changes which older women are called upon to cope with in our everyday life. These included changes in our bodies, in our

families, in our status as women, in social values and our place as Australians in world affairs.

It was agreed that to cope with these and other changes we need to be flexible, open-minded and prepared to adapt to ever-changing circumstances.

Joan Hook

'ave a laugh!

One day, three men were hiking and unexpectedly came upon a large raging, violent river. They needed to get to the other side, but had no idea of how to do so. The first man prayed to God, saying, "Please God, give me the strength to cross this river." Poof! God gave him big arms and strong legs, and he was able to swim across the river in about two hours, after almost drowning a couple of times.

Seeing this, the second man prayed to God, saying, "Please God, give me the strength and the tools to cross this river." Poof! God gave him a rowboat and he was able to row across the river in about an hour, after almost capsizing the boat a couple of times.

The third man had seen how this worked out for the other two, so he also prayed to God saying, "Please God, give me the strength and the tools-and the intelligence-to cross this river." And poof! God turned him into a woman. She looked at the map, hiked upstream a couple of hundred yards, then walked across the bridge.

Anon.

More About 'Vimie's

I'd had a second leg operation, the first one being unsuccessful. Only a few weeks had passed, and I had been shunted back to St Vincent's from St Luke's, as the surgeon only operated at St Vincent's. A different ward this time, but a slight improvement on the first one.

Asleep, sedated by painkillers and sleeping pills, I was awoken suddenly in the dead of night by a large torch shining into my face. Three burly nurses surrounded my bed. "We change your sheets," one of them said, pushing and tugging at me and the bedclothes. "Can't it wait till morning?" I said feebly. They ignored me. They rolled me this way and that, not speaking, ignoring my muffled moans. Eventually, the ordeal was over, and they left me to try to settle down again.

The next night, the scenario was the same. This time, they said they had to rub my back and change the dressing on my wound. More pain, more groaning, which they ignored. And the next night, they came again. This time there was no pain – they insisted they had to take my temperature, check my pulse and blood pressure. I suppose it was all necessary, but I didn't appreciate it one little bit.

Renee Simons

The more things change...

Last Thursday I attended the first of a series of four University of the Third Age (U3A) lectures, "Shakespeare in our Time" with Mel (I think this may be short for Melanie) Davies as the lecturer.

U3A is a bit of a misnomer, and could put some of the older people off. They probably have visions of heavy lectures and masses of study. This is far from the truth. It is a way for older people to obtain intellectual stimulation that is just as important to us as we grow older as a good diet, etc. The lecturers really do know their topics, and the breadth of knowledge of the thirty-five or so people who lead the various groups in the Gosford-Wyong region is amazing. However, I did not set out to give U3A a plug. What set me back on my heels was the fact that I had forgotten so much about the content of the Bard's plays.

The first play Mal spoke about was "Macbeth". Will Shakespeare, both playwright and actor, wrote this play in the 1500s. The basic theme of the play is what driving ambition and a lust for power can lead a person to do. It also shows how this can affect the people around that person.

The next play is to be "King Lear". On the way home from the lecture, I realised I did not have a single work by Will in my library. A quick call to

one of my favourite second-hand bookshops quickly resolved that for \$7.50 the complete works of Shakespeare were mine.

As I write this, I have not completed reading the play. However, Act I: Scene – Britain, was an eye opener, because five hundred years ago the subjects Shakespeare is using as a theme are sibling rivalry, jealousy, a desire for power, the use of flattery to obtain wealth, blaming the gods and others for your own mistakes.

Lo and behold, a little further into the play a situation which is oft repeated today, that is, the children dispossessing a parent of everything, including dignity. As Goneril (elder daughter) says, as she sets about to plot with her older sister, Regan, "Idle old man, That still would manage those authorities That he hath given away! Now, by my life, Old fools are babies again, and must be used With checks as flatteries, when they are seen abused..."

It is sad to reflect on how little effect the experiences of five centuries have had overall on human nature. It would seem it is only the minority that learns from the mistakes of the past.

What can I say, except, "Stop the world, I want to get off!"

June Goss

Mobile Phones: Choices and Options

Are prepaid mobile phones better for the budget than fixed term contracts? Prepaid mobiles are advertised as having no bills, no commitments and no long-term contracts. You save money on access charges as there are no connection or continuing monthly access charges and of course there are no handset payments. The calls you make are, however, charged at a higher rate than on a fixed term contract. If you are a low user or want to use your phone mainly for incoming calls and emergencies then the prepaid mobile phone is a good option.

Telecommunication
Consumer's Network

Book of the Year

In our March newsletter an obituary of Diana Kidd appeared, as well as a book review of her last book for children 'Two Hands Together'.

This book won the Book of the Year award in the Younger Readers category. It is a sensitively told story on the issue of reconciliation as experienced by children and I highly recommend it as reading for our grandchildren. Available in major bookstores for \$12.95.

Trudy Davis

OWN Matters
October 2001

Community Health

Are you aware of the many health organizations in the community? The ambulance service provides emergency ambulance transport free of charge in NSW to holders of Pensioner Concession Card, Health Care Card and Commonwealth Seniors Health Card. Community Health Centres will provide information or advice on matters relating to health. Dental services are available through dental clinics, although there is currently a long waiting period. Dentacare offers another alternative. Hearing services are available through Australian Hearing Service and Self Help for the Hard of Hearing.

Other useful organizations include the Continence Foundation of Australia, the Arthritis Foundation of NSW and Appliances for Disabled People (PADP). PADP is based in many NSW hospitals and provides aids for daily living, equipment and appliances to increase the level of independence of people with permanent or indefinite disabilities.

Pharmaceuticals The Commonwealth Seniors Health Card, the Pensioners Concession Card and the Health Card entitle holders to medicines for \$3.50 as long as they are under the PBS. However some of the drugs under this scheme will cost more.

Podiatry A discounted podiatry service is available to pensioners from some local community centres. Some will visit people at home for a fee.

Eyesight Sydney Eye Hospital and many other hospitals where there are eye clinics provide eye treatments free of charge for all patients who hold a Medicare card.

Optometrists Commonwealth Seniors Health Card, Seniors Card and Pensioners Concession Card are eligible for discounts. If you would like more information on these services phone Seniors Information Service on 13 12 44 Monday to Friday.

Guess Who?

Can you imagine working at the following company? It has a little over 500 employees with the following statistics:

29 have been accused of spousal abuse

7 have been arrested for fraud

19 have been accused of writing bad cheques

117 have bankrupted at least two businesses

3 have been arrested for assault

71 cannot get a credit card due to bad credit

14 have been arrested on drug related charges

8 have been arrested for shoplifting

21 are current defendants in lawsuits

In 1998 alone, 84 were stopped for drunk driving

Can you guess which organization this is? Give up?

It's the 535 members of the United States Congress – the same group that perpetually cranks out hundreds upon hundreds of new laws designed to keep the rest of the world in line.

From ausfem-polnet email list

We should have known ...

According to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, while both male and female reindeer grow antlers in the summer each year, male reindeer drop their antlers at the beginning of winter, usually late November to mid-December.

Female reindeer retain their antlers till after they give birth in the spring. Therefore, according to every historical rendition depicting Santa's reindeer, every single one of them, from Rudolph to Blitzen. . . .had to be a girl.

We should have known. Only a woman would be able to drag a fat man in a red velvet suit all around the world in one night and not get lost!

Polly Gow

notice

Wanted

Would anyone have a slide projector and screen gathering dust in their garage? The **Lost Ladies** group can put it to good use and also store it securely for you at Windmill Street! We are also looking for an old epidiascope (to reflect a page of a book onto a screen) and overhead projector. If you can help, please contact Annette Butterfield

New talent, New Voices

Wanted

The OWN Health Group wants to renew its energies. If you are interested in health issues and want your voice to be heard, come along to our monthly meetings and contribute to discussions on accessing, improving and coping with health services in NSW. Our next meeting is on Tuesday 16 October - please come along, you will be very welcome.

Jean Braithwaite

Sources of funding ...

Sidney Myer Foundation: (03) 9207 3040 or www.myerfoundation.org.au

Harold Mitchell Foundation: www.haroldmitchellfoundation.com.au or (03) 9672 3001

Clubs NSW: www.clubsnsw.com.au or 9268 3000 or email cdse@clubsnsw.com.

Listen to Carers
is the theme of this years
Carers Week
21-27 October 2001
Phone 6282 7886

Bequests to the Older Women's Network

If you would like to include a bequest to OWN in your will, the following options will guide you in its wording. Please specify which Older Women's Network you wish to be the recipient of your gift: the Older Women's Network NSW or the Older Women's Network Sydney

Option No. 1

I devise the sum of \$to the Older Women Network for the general purpose of the Older Women's Network OR for the specific purpose of such purpose being consistent with the aims and objectives of the Older Women's Network, to be administered by the Older Women's Network.

Option No 2 (for a proportional bequest)

I give to the Older Women's Network for its general purposes or the specific purpose of % of my estate (or% of the rest of my estate).

The gift you make to the Older Women's Network will be an enduring record of your generosity.

board

ADE Computer – FREE

If you are interested in an early model IBM compatible computer (no printer) not suitable for internet connection, but perfectly fine for word-processing, please contact
Elizabeth 9909 2994.

GET SHAPELY AND SUPPLE FOR SPRING!

POLYNESIAN DANCING,
Mondays, 1-2 pm.
YOGA,
Wednesdays, 10-11 am.

\$5 per class.
Waverley Seniors Centre, 31-33 Spring Street.
Bondi Junction.

Wellness

Wellness is the way in which
Each individual
Looks to achieve
Lasting harmonies
Naturally, whilst maintaining
Emotional and physical
Safety and
Security
Beverley Bennett

Please contact us ...

We have received a story written by Doris Eather called 'My favourite childhood memories' but have no contact details. Doris, can you please contact Dorothy on 9247 7046?

Glaucoma

You and your family/friends are invited to attend the Sydney Glaucoma Meeting
2 – 4 Saturday 3 November 2001 at Chapter House (entrance in Bathurst Street)
St Andrews Cathedral, George Street, Sydney. Guest speakers.

Subscribe to *OWN Matters* Individuals \$20 per year

Name _____ Organisation _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Fax _____ Email _____

Please send your cheque/money order to Newsletter Subscription, Older Women's Network NSW, 87 Lower Fort Street, Millers Point 2000.